

Abraham Lincoln papers

From Abraham Lincoln to John G. Smith [Copy in John G. Nicolay's Hand]¹, February 8, 1865

¹ Lincoln had issued a call for an additional 300,000 volunteers on December 19, 1864. On January 24, 1865, the War Department assigned each state its quota of volunteers under the December 1864 call. If a state did not fill its quota of volunteers before February 15, the difference had to be made up by the draft. Officials in several states believed that the formula used by the War Department to calculate the quotas was unfair. The governors of New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Vermont were particularly upset and they urged Lincoln to ameliorate the situation. In response to these complaints, Lincoln signed an order on February 6 that created a board to examine the quotas. Attorney General James Speed, General Richard Delafield and Colonel Charles W. Foster were appointed to the board, with Speed acting as president. For Lincoln's order creating the examination board and the board's report, see *Official Records*, Series III, Volume 4, 1134-42. For complaints about the quotas, see Reuben E. Fenton to Lincoln, January 26, 1865; Henry B. Anthony, et al. to Lincoln, February 3, 1865; and the following, referring to Vermont.

Executive Mansion.

Washington, Feby. 8th, 1865.

Complaint is made to me by Vermont that the assignment of her quota for the draft on the pending call is intrinsically unjust, and also in bad faith of the government's promise to fairly allow credits for men previously furnished— To illustrate a supposed case is stated as follows.

Vermont and New Hampshire must between them furnish 6000 men on the pending call,² and being equals each must furnish as many as the other in the long run. But the Government finds that on former calls, Vermont furnished a surplus of 500, and New Hampshire a surplus of 1500. These two surpluses making 2000 are added to the 6000, making 8000 to be furnished by the two states or 4000 each less by fair credits. Then subtract Vermont's surplus of 500 from her 4000, leaves 3500 as her quota on the pending call; and likewise subtract New Hampshire's surplus of 1500 from her 4000 leaves 2500 as her quota on the pending call. These 3500 & 2500 make precisely the 6000 which the supposed case requires from the two states; and it is just — equal — for Vermont to furnish 1000 more now than New Hampshire, because New Hampshire has heretofore furnished a 1000 more than Vermont which equalizes the burthens of the two in the long run. And this result so far from being bad faith to Vermont is indispensable to keeping good faith with New Hampshire— By no

other result can the 6000 men be obtained from the two states and at the same time deal justly and keep faith with both; and we do but confuse ourselves in questioning the process by which the right result is reached. The supposed case is perfect as an illustration.

2 The four preceding words are interlineated by Lincoln.

The pending call is not for 300.000 men subject to fair credits, but is for 300.000 remaining after all fair credits have been deducted; and it is impossible to concede what Vermont asks, without coming out short of the 300.000 men, or making other localities pay for the partiality shown her.

This upon the case stated — if there be different reasons for making an allowance to Vermont let them be presented and considered.

Yours truly

[Endorsed on Envelope by Lincoln:]

Gov. Smith, of Vt